

VZCZCXRO4594
PP RUEHDBU RUEHIK RUEHYG
DE RUEHBUL #0950/01 0831259
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 241259Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6999
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3549
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3803
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 000950

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO GASTRIGHT, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
TREASURY FOR ABAUKOL
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-82, AND POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [MASS](#) [SOCI](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/QALENOW: SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON SECURITY,
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SITUATION

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Qal-e Now, in the western part of Afghanistan, has witnessed much progress over the last year. Residents of the capital enjoy a much better quality of life than they did under the Taliban. The PRT has had a direct impact on economic growth in the provincial capital. However, this progress has not reached the rest of Badghis. While threats to security are relatively low compared to other provinces, the government's ability to confront security threats is also comparatively weak. Rising insecurity in the northern districts of Murghab and Ghormach has prevented the provincial government from initiating development projects. Recent violence is a result of ethnic conflict and criminal activity as well as increased insurgent activity. Security initiatives such as DIAG and counter narcotics programs have languished, especially in Murghab, Ghormach and Jawand districts. The inability of the local government to extend its influence province-wide impedes progress on a variety of fronts. There are reportedly plans to station ANA forces in the Murghab area, but no date has been set for the deployment. Governor Mohammed Nasim has attempted to create support for his administration by quickly responding to local emergencies, but many local residents blame him for the slow pace of development in the districts. Until the security situation and provincial road network is improved, the province will continue to experience highly mixed political, economic, and social progress. END SUMMARY.

Security: Capital Safe, Regions Less So

12. (SBU) Badghis has historically been a very stable province, but over the last year insecurity has increased. While threats to security are relatively low compared to other provinces, the government's ability to confront threats is also comparatively weak. There is no Afghan National Army (ANA) presence in Badghis and the Afghan National Police (ANP) lacks the manpower, training, equipment and possibly motivation to provide security throughout the province. The government has focused its security resources primarily in Qal-e Now and the southern districts, in effect creating a relatively safe zone around the capital while allowing a zone of insecurity to develop in the districts of Ghormach,

Murghab, and Jawand. The general impression in the province is that insecurity has spread province-wide, but the reality is that the level of insecurity varies between regions.

13. (SBU) Security in Qal-e Now has remained static or improved slightly over the last year. There has never been an insurgency-related attack in the capital, and members of the PRT continue to walk to meetings in the city with only a two-man armed escort. UNAMA recently opened an office in Qal-e Now after UNAMA's regional security advisor pronounced security in the capital "manageable." The PRT Commander believes that overall security in Qal-e Now has improved in recent months and notes that common crime is very rare in the capital. Frequent PRT patrols of the capital area augment the large ANP presence in and around Qal-e Now.

14. (SBU) Security in the northern districts of Murghab, Ghormach, and to a lesser extent eastern Jawand continues to deteriorate. In the last six-months there has been a marked increase in the number of security incidents, with a large percentage of them being targeted against foreigners. In addition to UNAMA's new office, World Vision continues to operate in the capital, but the only NGO that has any significant reach beyond Qal-e Now is the Bangladesh NGO BRAC. BRAC runs all the health clinics and hospitals in the districts and BRAC's Director, Dr. Islam, believes the situation facing his employees is getting worse. Two months ago, Dr. Islam informed PRToff that he had withdrawn his doctors from all clinics in Murghab and Ghormach due to security concerns. Medical care in those districts and much of Jawand is in the hands of locally hired and trained nurses. In addition to threats and attacks on BRAC medical facilities, the company working on the Ring Road in Ghormach

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has come under attack.

15. (SBU) The Spanish Development Agency (AECI) recognizes the need to provide development in both Murghab and Ghormach. AECI's reconstruction plan calls for some development and road projects to begin in Murghab in 2007, with increased programs including clinic and school construction province-wide in 2008. AECI director Pablo Yuste highlighted that his development plan depended on increased security in the northern districts. He opined that "we are losing the north." He added that "all our work and gains in the Qal-e Now area are threatened by the increased dissatisfaction of the people in the northern districts. If this dissatisfaction continues to grow there could be a full-blown insurgency in the province."

16. (SBU) There has been an increase in improvised explosive device (IED) activity and several attacks against ANA and ANP outposts that could indicate an increase in insurgent activity in the region. These attacks could also be the result of local or ethnic conflicts. The northern districts of Badghis continue to be too unstable for NGOs, the PRT or the provincial government to conduct meaningful development activities in areas where such projects are needed the most.

ANP Improving, ANA Needs To Be Deployed

17. (SBU) There are reportedly plans to deploy an ANA unit to the Murghab area sometime in the spring. The deployment of a sizable ANA unit would improve security significantly, but the lack of a deployment date makes it imperative that provincial leadership, supported by the PRT, take the initiative to increase the capacity of security forces that are currently deployed in the province.

18. (SBU) The ANP continues to benefit from training and support received from the PRT. While not involved directly in police training, members of the Spanish Military work closely with ANP and National Directorate for Security (NDS) leadership. The PRT Commander regularly attends Provincial

Coordination Center (PCC) and other security related meetings and has developed strong relationships with the governor and all other provincial authorities involved in security related issues. The Spanish Military also conducts frequent joint patrols with members of the ANP to increase the force's competence and confidence. The newly-deployed U.S. Military Police Support Team (PST) and Civilian Mentors have also recently begun operations aimed at standing up the ANP as an effective security force able to project its power throughout the province. The PST is focused on teaching ANP officers basic police skills while the Civilian Mentors work on improving the ANP's management and organization. While both of these programs are in their infancy, they have already demonstrated great potential to improve ANP capacity.

¶9. (SBU) A contributing factor to insecurity in Murghab is the geographic isolation of the district. In 2007, AECI plans to build the first 30 kilometers of an improved road from Qal-e Now to Murghab. When completed, the road should cut normal travel times between the capital and Murghab in half, and increase access to the district during winter months. In addition to increasing the ability of ANP and PRT forces to exert influence in Murghab, it will open the district to increased trade and commerce as well.

¶10. (SBU) Having an improved ANP will not improve security significantly unless the local government has the will to deploy the ANP in greater numbers to problem areas. The local government's track record of centralizing ANP forces near the capital will need to change if security province-wide is to be improved. Maintaining the strong working relationship developed between local leadership and the Spanish military will be fundamental in moving the ANP to a more aggressive posture.

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Politics: New Governor Working To Establish Himself

¶11. (SBU) Mohammed Nasim has been serving as governor for just over five months, and while the jury is still out on his effectiveness, many locals blame him for a perceived lack of progress in the province. Nasim has attempted to establish his authority by effectively reacting to events such as flooding in Murghab. During the flooding he quickly formed an emergency response team and personally went to Murghab for two weeks to supervise the relief operation. His efforts demonstrated a real interest in strengthening his popularity outside of Qal-e Now, and he continues to seek ways to demonstrate the positive results of his administration.

¶12. (SBU) A key criticism of Nasim is his lack of experience, especially in the area of security. In response to problems, Nasim is known to dispatch quickly letters to the ministry officials, instructing them to "resolve the issue" with no detailed instructions as to how to proceed. Another common criticism of Nasim's administration is corruption, but to date no real evidence has been produced. Recently, two members of the Attorney General's office were in Qal-e Now investigating the provincial government. It is too soon to say if any charges will come out of the investigation or if they will reach to the Governor, but the investigation has weakened Nasim. Acting on authority from Kabul, the prosecutors overturned Nasim's appointment of the Provincial Administrator and three District Administrators, ordering that the men fired by Nasim re-take their positions. To date, Nasim has yet to reinstate the individuals in question.

¶13. (SBU) The provincial administration has made little progress on some key programs such as DIAG and counter narcotics initiatives. Local DIAG members hold regular meetings, and occasionally a small cache of weapons is collected, but all DIAG efforts are centered in the secure districts with little effort expended to promote DIAG in Murghab, Ghormach or Jawand. Similarly, to date the province

has no comprehensive counter narcotics plan, virtually no eradication effort and local authorities have only interdicted a small fraction of the opium believed to transit the province. While Badghis is not considered a major opium producer, there are reportedly significant amounts of opium grown in Murghab, Ghormach and Jawand. The failure of DIAG and counter-terrorism efforts in Badghis is indicative of the lack of reach of the provincial government.

Economy: Growth in the Capital, Not In Districts

¶14. (SBU) There has been economic progress since the PRT was established. Some of this progress is the result of development and quick impact projects, such as the creation of a power grid capable of providing light to 90 percent of the city. Local consumer demand has been spurred by the large number of citizens (over 300) employed by the PRT and an even larger number working on other development projects around Qal-e Now. The city center of Qal-e Now boasts many more shops than a year before. Some of them, such as the three carpet stores, obviously cater to foreign workers and soldiers, but many more offer local food and products targeted at the growing number of local residents with money to spend. Although the growth of consumer demand has produced a slight increase in the cost of basic consumer goods, the standard of living in the capital appears to have grown more rapidly than inflation.

¶15. (SBU) The economic growth in the capital has yet to reach some districts, especially Ghormach, Murghab and Jawand. Last year a drought ravaged local farmers across the province, and heavy flooding impoverished thousands in Murghab and Ghormach. Agriculture remains the primary source of employment. The poor road network puts much of the

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province beyond the reach of development projects and exacerbates the economic isolation of outlying districts, especially Ghormach, Murghab, and Jawand. The standard of living of many villagers could be improved by the construction of a well or a micro-dam project near their village, but road conditions and the security concerns outlined above keep NGOs, the PRT and the local government from launching such programs.

COMMENT

¶16. (SBU) As the effectiveness of the ANP improves, the provincial leadership will need to embrace a more forward-leaning ANP force posture to move ANP officers from around the capital to the districts of Ghormach and Murghab. The positive effects of the Spanish military's presence and AEI's development projects are substantial, but in order to protect the gains already made and to spread this progress to the districts, security must be improved in the Murghab and Ghormach districts. ANA deployment would be a welcome addition to provincial security, but the PRT is taking concrete steps to increase the capacity of security forces already present in the province to attain this goal. Until security improves in the northern districts, development projects needed to incorporate them into the provincial and national economy will not be able to be implemented. END COMMENT.
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